

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



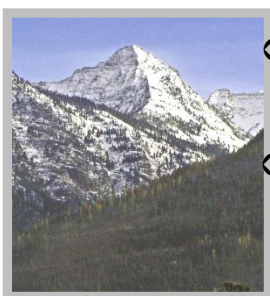
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 8:00 AM, Friday, March 02, 2012
Valid Until: Midnight, Friday, March 02, 2012
Next Update: Tuesday, March 6, 2012
Issued by: Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary

3 - Considerable : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation, on steep, open slopes and gullies, especially in areas with significant amounts of newly precipitated or wind deposited snow

2 - Mod : below 5,000

Avalanche Danger Trend

Trending higher Saturday through Monday
with the arrival of moderate to strong winds through the weekend.

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	3 - CONSIDERABLE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous avalanche conditions • Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural avalanche <i>possible</i> • Human triggered avalanches <i>likely</i>
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small avalanches in many areas • Larger avalanches in specific areas • Very large avalanches in isolated areas

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION**All Mountain Ranges – below 5,000 ft. elevation**

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies, particularly those that recently received significant new snowfall • Evaluate snow and terrain carefully
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural avalanche unlikely • Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small avalanches in specific areas • Larger avalanches in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate snow fall across the region in the last 48 hours except in the West Cabinets where we had heavy snow fall
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moist, moderate, snowfall in many mountain locations, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <u>In most of the region</u> a range of .4-1.4-inches of snow water equivalent, with Noisy Basin receiving the higher accumulation of SWE ◦ <u>West Cabinets received over 2 inches</u> of snow water equivalent in the last 48 hours.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lows in the mid teens highs into the mid 20's
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light winds across the region since Tuesday AM

Field Observation Locations

Thursday, 3-01-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garver Mountain NW aspect in Purcell Range North of Troy • Essex Mountain East of Isaac Walton Inn
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Observer Report Locations

Thursday, 3-01-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle Fork near Skiumah/Rescue N aspect (see GCAC website)
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Avalanches Observed

- No natural avalanches observed
- Poor visibility In the Kootenai area
- Fair visibility in the Middle Fork area
- Observed surface instability on South aspects in the Essex Drainage.
- Report of a remotely triggered soft slab avalanche near Essex on a E-NE aspect, off peak 7097, size 2.5.

Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★★	-Purcell observation recorded whumping and shooting cracks. <i>Heavy snow fall in the West Cabinets and moderate snowfall elsewhere in the region</i>		
Wind Loading	★★	-Predicted wind transport over the weekend with moderate to strong wind loading will likely occur from NE through SE aspects.		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	-Concern with the buried surface hoar and thin interface of faceted grains over melt-freeze ice crusts. -A persistent weak layer of buried surface hoar still a concern for our region. This layer is in the middle of the snowpack and is reflected in ECTP stress tests with strong force and Q1 shears. All these weak layers when present continue to fail with little to moderate force in shear tests -Concern remains with faceted layers found at the ground bridged by hard layers above.		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze				
Rain-on-Snow				
Loose Snow				
Other Concerns				

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next storm cycle predicted Saturday with a NW flow , moderate accumulation over the weekend.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10-12 inches from Friday night through Sunday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temperatures increasing resulting in more dense snowfall.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds expected to be moderate to strong out of the West.

Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saturday through Monday we expect the avalanche danger to trend upward with the new storm activity coupled with moderate to strong West winds
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be particularly alert to new snow loading either from precipitation or wind with regards to persistent weak layers• Forecasted loading could set up an inverted snowpack stressing weak interfaces beneath the surface
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>ALWAYS carry and know how to use your avalanche safety equipment</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Transceiver</i>○ <i>Probe</i>○ <i>Shovel</i><i>(A lack of this equipment played in the recent fatal incidents)</i>• <i>Watch for any rapid changes in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i>• <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on any slope that has the potential to avalanche</i>• <i>Don't die being reckless or doing something stupid</i>